2: Schapera E-4, 5 (no date) 1936
FX13 Hottentot FX13
Nama

Hottentots, "because he brought such a bad message, and therefore we disliked to eat his flesh."[1]

Death itself is attributed in many cases to the influence of the evil being ǂGamab, "whose greatest aim is to harm people and to destroy them," or to the /hai /nun, ghosts of the dead, who chase living people or come to them in dreams and try to drag them off to the grave. The /gei aops or magicians can also use their power for evil, and thus cause people to sicken and die.[2] The malice of ghosts or evil magicians seems in fact to be by far the most common cause of death in Hottentot eyes. Mrs. Hoernlé even says definitely that "the Namas considered that all sickness was caused either by ǂGamab, or the /Hai /Nun, or by persons somehow in contact with them, the witchcraft practitioners."[3] Sometimes, however, death will also follow automatically on the violation of certain trivial observances or avoidances, and in such cases is apparently not linked up in any way with supernatural beings or their human agents. Cold water, for example, must be carefully avoided by a menstruating woman or anybody else in the condition of !nam. Commenting upon this regulation, Mrs. Hoernlé says: "I have had many instances which were given to me of people who actually have died because they were obliged to touch water when they should not have done so, and their absolute belief in the danger is quite sufficient to cause death in many instances."[4]

It is obvious from these beliefs that the Hottentots are far from considering natural causes alone to be sufficient explanation for death. At the same time one gets the impression from the literature generally that such causes are not entirely disregarded, as for example, in the case of wounds, burns, falls, starvation, etc., which are known to cause death or disablement in a natural way. But no attempt appears to have been made to investigate in any detail how far and in what circumstances purely natural causes in themselves may be admitted as sufficient explanation for death.

Dead people are as a rule disposed of by burial. The only other mode of disposal is exposure, which takes place only in a few special cases. Among the Cape Hottentots, for example, one of twins

[1] Native texts of the myth are published in Meinhof, *Lehrbuch der Nama-Sprache*, 170–1 and Schultze, *Nama-land und Kalahari*, 448–9; translated versions in Wikar, "Beytrag aus van Plettenberg," 118–19; Bleek, *Bushman Folk-lore in S. Africa*, 69–73; Kleinschmidt, in Moritz, "Die Absolute Entschränkung über D.S.W.A.," 1915, p. 113.

[2] Hahn, *Tsuni-ǁGoam*, 83–4; Hoernlé, "Social Value of Water among the Namas," 317–21 *passim*.

[3] Op. cit., 320–1; cf. Hahn, op. cit., 83.

[4] "South-West Africa," 27.

2: Schapera E-4, 5 (no date) 1930
FX13 Hottentot FX13
Nama

might be buried alive, or else placed in some exposed spot or in bushes to be destroyed by the elements or by wild animals.[1] Similarly, according to Hahn, "a man who is killed as a criminal, or who is slain according to the rules of the vendetta, or a slave killed by the master, or enemies killed in the battle—all are left to the animals of the desert to be feasted upon, so that they will be entirely annihilated." Such people who are devoured by vultures or hyenas are called *//gauna //oro khoin*, i.e. people who died the *//gauna* death.[2]

There existed among the Hottentots also the custom, already noted among the Bushmen, of abandoning elderly people to their fate. Kolb describes it rather more fully than do other writers. When old people become helpless or decrepit, he says, their eldest son or nearest relation applies to the people of the kraal for permission, never refused, to relieve himself of the burden and to deliver the suffering old person from the miserable condition to which he is reduced. The son kills an ox or a few sheep to regale the men of the kraal, who take leave of their old neighbour. Then, on the appointed day, the old man or woman is placed on a riding ox and, accompanied by an escort, is conducted to a small hut specially built for the purpose at some distance from the kraal. Here he is left alone, with a small quantity of provisions placed by his side, to die ultimately of starvation or to be devoured by wild beasts.[3]

This account may not be quite accurate in all its details. But there is ample evidence that the exposure of old people in this way was common and widespread among all the Hottentots.[4] Hahn, inquiring into the reason for the practice, was told by the Naman that it was sometimes done by very poor people who had not enough food to support their aged parents. "But sometimes," he adds, "even if there was food enough, and if people, especially women, who had cattle and milk-cows of their own, gave suspicion that they were under the influence of *//Gaunab*, and did secretly mischief by practising witchcraft, they were left to die from starvation. The people, awe-stricken, were almost compelled to fly from them."[5]

Where burial takes place, it is accompanied by a series of rites.

[1] Cf. above, p. 266.
[2] Op. cit., 88.
[3] *Vergeldings der Groote Hoffenung*, 133.
[4] Grevenbroek, "Uit den Ouden Tijd," 241; Sparrman, *Voyage to the Cape*, i, 358; Campbell, *Travels in S. Africa*, 418; Alberti, "Beobachtungen im Caffer-Namalande," 265; Shaw, *Memorials of S. Africa*, 40–1; Moffat, *Missionary Labours in S. Africa*, 133–6 Pilaski, *Hoogduytsen Zuid-Afrika's*, 334.
[5] Op. cit., 86; cf. 74.

2: Schapera E-4, 5 (no date) 1939
FX13 Hottentot FX13
Nama
Cape Hottentots

The funeral over, everybody returned to the kraal. Here, according to Kolb, the men and the women again squatted apart in front of the hut, repeating their wailing and frequently calling on the dead person by name. At last silence fell, and the oldest of the men arose, entered the circle first of the men and then of the women, and besprinkled them with his urine. Then he entered the hut through the door, took some ashes from the hearth, came out through the opening previously made in the back, and strewed the ashes over all the people, who rubbed them into their bodies. Some of the near relatives also took cowdung and smeared it over their arms, legs and body. Then they all separated and went to their huts. The family of the deceased, however, did not dare to enter the hut where he had died, but sought accommodation with other people.

On the following day all the huts in the kraal were taken down and the people left the locality; but the hut of the dead person was left standing with all its belongings. Nothing might be taken from it. Before the departure, the heir of the dead person slaughtered a sheep, and such of the other near relatives as could afford it did the same. All who had been present at the funeral were then feasted with this meat. The caul of the sheep he had slaughtered was thickly strewn with *kacha*, twisted into a cord, and hung round the neck of the heir, where he had to wear it until it rotted away. The other relatives likewise hung about their necks the cauls of the sheep they had killed. Poor relatives, if they could not afford to slaughter an animal and hence were unable to procure a caul, shaved their heads in furrowed ridges as a sign that they too were in mourning.

It is uncertain from Kolb's account just which people were expected to mourn, and whether the signs of mourning varied according to the relationship of the mourners to the deceased. An earlier description speaks of all the men of a large kraal having their heads shaved as a sign of mourning, but as the dead person concerned was their chief, the usage in this case may not have been the one customary in ordinary deaths.[1] At the same time, there is nothing to indicate whether the funerary rites for chiefs differed in any way from those for commoners. There is also no clear indication how long the period of mourning lasted, and whether any special prohibitions and other usages had to be observed by the mourners during this period. Kolb simply says that the lamentations might be kept up for three or four days or even a week after the death, but throws no further light on the question.

[1] Godée-Molsbergen, *Reizen in Zuid-Afrika*, I, 209.

10: Grevenbroek F-5 (ca. 1694) 1933
FX13 Hottentot FX13
Cape Hottentot
South Africa FX17

S H 845 847 766 H 854

a mother of two is unequal to the task of rearing both at the same time.[11]) If the mother dies in labour or immediately after giving birth to a child, then, with the same cruelty as before, they bury her at once with the embryo or infant, even if alive. However it does sometimes happen that a father who is rich in cattle hires a nurse for the little daughter who has survived, and hands her over to her care.

H 854 847

Here I think I ought not to pass over in silence the fact that a certain smith, who was riding twenty miles from the Cape, heard a child wailing in a tree, and not far off he found the mother to whom he gave a good hiding to teach her to love and care for her offspring.

H 847

To this I think I should add that certain European women at the Cape itself, running up just in time, dug up a little girl buried by the Africans. They raised a sum of money by subscription and hired a nurse for the child.[12])

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If a cow gives birth to a male and a female calf at the same time, they cut the male up and cast it to the dogs, the female they foolishly keep although it will never bear, for it is an unheard-of thing for these Africans that a twin calf should be fruitful.

224 252

For the most part they maintain a scant subsistence by means of snare, hook, weel and weapon. If their hunters wound any wild creature, even an elephant, with their poisoned arrows, they follow it from afar as it flees; and if they cannot come upon it sooner, then after sunset in the thickening light when its limbs are now stiffening with the poison and the chill of evening and when its blood is congealed, it falls and the hunters come up with it, flay it, and dismember it. The heart, to the valves and orifice of which the gathered poison clings, they cut out, and having chopped off and cast away all discoloured flesh,

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[11]) This incident is recorded in the official journal (Jan. 24, 1699): "Yesterday afternoon some Cape ladies, whilst taking a walk towards the downs where a number of Hottentots ordinarily live, were told that the latter had buried a woman who had been delivered of a child the previous afternoon and died shortly afterwards, and that with her they had buried the living baby, after having put it into a bag, covering it with earth as usual. Thereupon the women . . . opened the grave as quickly as possible, and took out of it the little child alive." The incident of the smith I have not been able to confirm, but it seems equally authentic, and shows that infanticide was on occasion practised by the Hottentots (cf. Fritsch, *op. cit.*, 234).

H 766 847

11: Maingard Q-5 (1931-1932) 1932
FX13 Hottentot FX13
Korana

Translation :

Iis was born at Saron (*!khoub*) in the year of the great snow. The snow covered all the huts. At that time the huts were made of mats. The mats were made of rush. The women collected the rushes in the river.

Note :

The Links returned to Saron in 1875 (See " History of the Links tribe."). In 1876 there was an abnormal fall of snow. The Government Land-Surveyor, A. C. Bailie, leaving on a Government mission for the North, writes : " On the evening of the 23rd June 1876, I started my waggon (from Kimberley) . . . . On arriving at Barkly West, about eighteen miles from here, I found my waggon stuck on account of the snow " (*Imperial Blue Book*, C. 2220-79 p. 74). He had been already delayed in Kimberley for the same reason (*ibid*, p. 47). Therefore *Iis* was born in 1876. She further told me and this was corroborated by *Tabab* and *Khris*, that they were still living in rush-mat huts at the end of the Anglo-Boer war (1902).

Funeral of a Chief.

gaxnaob ta !naue o, ina /hobab !naue-ina !khaib dibae, ina haikwa !narae, ina /harub !anibae, ina /kha: //o:b ǂ=nammi xa xamie, ina //na:ba //goiiie, ina /nai /haruba /hlu kx'aomme, ina /hu:ba thurue.

Translation :

If a chief is buried, he is buried in a grave. A chamber is made for him. Twigs are strewn. Then a mat is spread out. Then the dead body is wrapped up in a kaross. Then it is laid down. Then it is closed up with another mat. Then earth is thrown (over him).

Note :

My informants were *Teteb* and *Iis*. We had been talking about the grave of Johannes Links at Saron, which we had recently visited. *Teteb* told me he had seen the burial, and I asked him to give me a description of it. It surprised me that the old Hottentot practice of burying the body in a sitting posture was not mentioned. *Teteb* denied this and here he is supported by a very accurate observer, Schultze, *Aus Namaland und Kalahari*, p. 316

In plate 4, the grave of Johannes Links is seen marked by a heap of stones.

Terms of Relationship

The method used here was to procure from my informants genealogical lists (which follow later in these studies). Then the informants

13: Kirby R-5 (1931-1932) 1932
FX13 Hottentot FX13
Korana

[End] PLATE IV.

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Site of Saron Mission Station.

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The Grave of Johannes Links.

14:Hahn L-5 (ca. 1870-1880) 1881 FX13 Hottentot FX13

which, according to his belief, will soon bring the animal down. A hunter also may not sleep on his back, and pull his legs up, so that his knees stand bent up into the air. If he has done so he is sure to have bad luck.

19. About a future life there are certain indications, from the following sayings:—"That the "Stars are the eyes of the deceased," and also that the Stars are the souls of the deceased. The Khoikhoi appear to connect "eye" and "soul" in the same way, as is expressed in German, "Das Auge ist der Spiegel der Seele." The eye is the reflector of the soul. There is also a form of imprecation: "Thou happy one, may misfortune fall on thee, from the Star of my grandfather." This proves, beyond doubt, the belief in a life after this.

20. Ghosts and spectres have various names. ǁGaunagu (msc. plur.), ǀHaiǀnugu (msc. plur.), Sobokhoin (com. plur.), and ǀHai-khoin (com. plur.). There is a saying: ǁNaña ǁgauna ta ni—*i.e.*, I will hear it, if I am a ǁgauna—this means, if I am a ghost, then I will have a better insight into things, which I now do not understand.

Also, if a person has lost something and cannot find it, they say: ǀHaiǀnub ke ǂâ, Fawnfoot has stolen it.

21. These ghosts and spectres are believed in dark nights to leave the graves and come to the kraals. They make a rattling noise as if they were dragging skins over rocks and stones in order to frighten the people. This kind of spectres goes by the special name of ǀhausan. They are very mischievous, and their greatest pleasure is to beat people almost to death.

Here we have the key to the original meaning of the word ǁGaunab. He was at first a ghost, a mischief-maker and evil-doer, whose greatest aim was to harm people and to destroy (ǁgau, ǁgou) them. Some people are said to die from the influence of this evil spirit, and these are called ǁgauna ǁõra khoin—*i.e.*, people who died the ǁgauna death, or devil's death. Especially if people are not buried, but devoured by

14:Hahn L-5 (ca. 1870-1880) 1881 FX13 Hottentot FX13

776 vultures and hyenas, they are also considered ǂgauna
775 ǁōra. A man who is killed as a criminal, or who is
761 slain according to the rules of the vendetta, or a slave
766 killed by the master, or enemies killed in the battle—all are left to the animals of the desert to be feasted upon, *so that they will be entirely annihilated*, they are also considered ǂgauna ǁora khoin.

838 There is also a cruel custom among the Khoikhoi, of which I have convinced myself—that is, to leave elderly people to their fate; some food and water is left with them, and the younger folks remove to another spot. Inquiring into the reason of this so repulsive practice, I was told that it sometimes was done by very poor people, who had not food enough to support the aged parents. But sometimes, even if there was food enough, and if people, especially women, who had cattle and milk-cows of [754] their own, gave suspicion that they were under the influence of ǁGaunab, and did secretly mischief by practising witchcraft, they were left to die from starvation. The people, awe-stricken, were almost compelled to fly from them.

776 It is, therefore, not strange that ǂGaunab, the evil-spirit, is also invoked. They promised him offerings so as not to provoke his anger, as is the case among the ǂAuni-Nama, in the Walefish Bay territory. I am almost certain that, before the Khoikhoi-tribes separated, this bad Being, ǁGaunab, was generally worshipped, and is of much older date than Tsūiǁgoab and Heitsi-eibib. It [171] is strange that the ǂGabe-Bushmen, the ǂAi-Bushmen, the ǂNunin, and especially among these the Heiǂguin (or wooden noses), all know ǁGauna, whom they fear as an evil-doer, while we find no trace of the name Tsūiǁgoab or Heitsi-eibib. For these reasons I am of opinion that the ǁGauna was an evil demon, known already to the primitive Hottentot race, before there was a distinction between Sān and Khoikhoin. Tsūiǁgoab, however, was a secondary Being, the national God of the Khoikhoi branch.